



For Immediate Release

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CITY OF MILAN AWARDED TWO PLACEMAKING GRANTS

*A vacant lot will be transformed into a pocket park
Kayak and pedal boat rental program to open on Ford Lake*

Milan, Michigan (June 6, 2018) –The City of Milan, Milan Parks and Recreation and Milan Main Street are recipients of two Placemaking grants.

Placemaking is defined as a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces that capitalizes on a community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

According to the [Project for Public Spaces](#), “Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces and strengthens the connection between people and the places they share.”

Milan was awarded a \$4,000 grant from the [Ann Arbor Board of Realtors](#) to transform a vacant lot on Main Street into a pocket park. The grant guidelines stipulated that funds must be used to create a new public space. Local realtors must also be engaged in the process.

Jodie Franklin, broker for Milan-based Workhorse Realty and board president for the Ann Arbor Area Board of Realtors is a supporter and advocate of this grant.

“Preserving open spaces and creating community gathering spaces builds vibrancy and connections that attract new residents and visitors,” said Franklin. “The creation of a usable public space on this vacant lot will have a major impact on this community.”

The lot has been vacant since a 2011 fire destroyed the former Danube Inn located on that spot at 24 W. Main Street. Built in 1901 as the Stimpson Hotel, it was renamed the Danube Inn in 1971.

With no immediate plans to sell the lot, the owner permitted the City use of the space. The lot was used extensively for event programming in 2017. The grant from the Ann Arbor Board of Realtors will be used to transform the lot into a temporary pocket park.

Milan-based Budd's Contracting will grade, level and install sod. Colorful café seating, plantings, and lighting will also be added. Two local businesses, Milan Coffee Works and Original Gravity, donated bourbon barrels that will be transformed into planters and positioned in the park.



“The transformation of this vacant lot is truly a collaborative effort,” remarked Jill Tewsley, Milan Main Street Director. “There is an excitement about reimagining a long-standing vacant lot as a usable and pleasant public space.”

Work on the lot will begin during the first week of June.

Earlier this month, Milan was awarded a \$10,000 Community Tourism Activation Plan (CTAP) grant from [Destination Ann Arbor](#) to activate Ford Lake. The CTAP grant, combined with support from Milan Parks and Recreation, Milan Main Street and the City of Milan will fund a kayak and pedal boat rental program that will open to the public in spring 2019.

The lake, which is situated in Milan’s downtown adjacent to Wilson Park, was created in the 1930’s when Henry Ford constructed a dam on the Saline River. In doing so, he forever reshaped the geography of Milan, Michigan. At the same time, Ford purchased an existing mill that he used as a hydroelectric plant to process soybeans and to manufacture ignition coils for the Ford Motor Company. The plant closed in 1948.

In the 1950’s, shortly after Ford closed his plant, it was common for families and visitors to picnic lakeside and to take small motor boats on the lake for fishing and pleasure.

Ford Lake remains a central part of Milan; however, access to and usage of the lake has deteriorated over the years. While people can reach a small area of the lake for fishing from the shore, it has been nearly three decades since on-lake access was available.

The City of Milan is undertaking a \$650,000 project to stabilize the roadway next to the lake, refurbish the original boat launch, and add a paved walkway on the lake's east side.

Jade Smith, Milan City Administrator believes that project combined with the boat rental program will have a positive impact on the economic vitality of Milan.

“On-water access to Ford Lake will create more traffic for our businesses, establish a destination in our downtown for residents and visitors, build pride in place, elevate physical and mental health, and provide access to history as well as to the water.”

ABOUT THE CITY OF MILAN

Connect With What Matters: The City of Milan features tree-lined streets, a charming historic downtown, beautiful parks, safe neighborhoods and great schools. Milan is filled with shops, restaurants, affordable housing, and many wonderful community events, including fireworks, parades, car shows, and movies & concerts in the park. We also have an energetic and vital Senior Community Center. Milan boasts 200 acres of beautifully maintained parks to wander through and play. Milan is a short drive from world-renowned cultural, academic, and sports attractions in Ann Arbor as well as both Detroit and Toledo and was named the “unsung” jewel of Washtenaw County by the Ann Arbor News.

ABOUT MILAN MAIN STREET

Milan is a Select level community in Michigan Main Street, an official affiliate of The National Main Street Center (Main Street America), which is committed to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.